# Former Commissioners of N.J. Dept. of Transportation/State Highway Department

By Margaret L. Webb, Librarian
New Jersey Department of Transportation Library

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NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MEMORANDUM

TO Mr. James Crawford
Executive Assistant to the
Commissioner, Rm. 152

FROM Margaret L. Webb
Librarian
Rm. 130

SUBJECT Biography of Former Commissioners DATE 10/27/82 TELEPHONE NO. 2-3082

As you requested in your memorandum of September 24th, enclosed is biographical and agency-related information about the Commissioners of NJDOT/State Highway Department.

As we discussed on September 27th I have begun with the creation in 1917 of the State Highway Department and have excluded interim "Acting" appointees. Since the end of the month was the deadline by which you indicated you needed this information, I have included as projects or a "first" only those items verifiable in the list of sources without extensive in-depth research.

Incidentally, seeing these individuals come alive in their reports and the minutes of their deliberations has been a fascinating experience.

Margaret L. Webb

cc: A. Cella

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Form AD-40 5/77 NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION

MEMORANDUM

TO Mr. Andrew Cella, Director
Central Services
Rm. 126

FROM Margaret L. Webb
Librarian
Rm. 130

SUBJECT Biography of Former Commissioners- Request of Mr. James Crawford DATE 10/27/ 82 TELEPHONE NO. 2-3082

For your information I am enclosing a copy of the report requested by Mr. Crawford 9/24/82. This has been one of the most enjoyable assignments I have worked on in recent memory.

Ms. Combs has been most helpful, dealing with numerous additions and changes in text. Of course, work we would normally do in the Library has had to wait, especially during the last two weeks, but with our staff limitations production of a project of this scope does not allow time for adequate attention elsewhere.

Nonetheless, I am indebted to Mr. Crawford for an informative and interesting assignment.

Margaret L. Webb

cc: D. Chiacchio

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FORMER COMMISSIONERS OF N.J. DEPT. OF TRANSPORTATION/STATE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT

ANNE P. CANBY (PENNINGTON) 1981-1982
Before coming to N.J. DOT as Assistant Commissioner for Management, this Wheaton College graduate was Deputy Assistant Secretary for Budget and Programs at the U. S. DOT, and had also worked for Congressman Paul N. McCloskey, Jr. and for the National Committee for an effective Congress. An authority on budget and transportation finance, Commissioner Canby was a strong advocate of the stable funding program. The first woman Commissioner of NJDOT, Ms Canby was 1981 Woman of the Year for the National Women's Transportation Seminar.

LOUIS J. GAMBACCINI (RIDGEWOOD) 1978-1981
Graduate of the University of Connecticut with a Master of Public Affairs degree from Syracuse University, Commissioner Gambaccini was a veteran of the Army, serving a year in Korea. An expert in mass transit, particularly known for his management of the Port Authority Trans-Hudson Corporation and its PATH rail system, he was Rail Department Director and PATH vice president and general manager for the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey, to which agency he returned in a senior position when he left NJDOT. The creation of the New Jersey Transit Corporation occurred in his administration in 1979 and he began the drive for stable funding. TRANSPAC and a$475 million dollar bond issue successfully passed while he was at NJDOT.

ALAN SAGNER (SOUTH ORANGE) 1974-1977
Partner in a Livingston building firm, Commissioner Sagner was a graduate of the University of Maryland. Despite defeat of a $300 million bond issue, projects finished included purchase of Arrow II and other rail equipment, distribution of vehicles to groups serving the elderly & handicapped, and development of the State Action Plan, Airport Systems, and Rail Plans. The "Right-Turn-On-Red" law required a large-scale implementation program. Commissioner Sagner resigned when he became Chairman of the Port Authority of New York and New Jersey.

JOHN C. KOHL (TRENTON) 1970-1973
A former Consultant, Professor, (of Civil Engineering), and Director of the Transportation Institute at University of Michigan, Commissioner Kohl was Assistant Administrator (Transportation) in the Housing Finance Agency, and Acting Director, Office of Transportation at HUD. Prior to becoming New Jersey Commissioner of Transportation, he also served as a consultant to the Automotive Safety Foundation and AAA, and was Executive Secretary, Division of Engineering, National Academy of Sciences. Despite failure of a $650 million bond issue, projects such as rail car purchase, station upgrading, bus service upgrading, opening of Interstate routes and the innovative "Dial-a-Ride" were carried out. The 1972 Master Plan was also published.

DAVID J. GOLDBERG (TRENTON) 1966-1970
The first Commissioner of Transportation heading the Department created in 1966 by combining the State Highway Department with the Bureau of Aviation, Mr. Goldberg was a member of the New Jersey and District of Columbia bar and a former Counsel to the Governor. A combined highway-mass transit bond issue totaling $640 million was passed in 1968 and the Department's first Master Plan was issued in that year. Improvements were made in passenger service and a high level of construction was accomplished.

DWIGHT R.G. PALMER (SHORT HILLS) 1954-1966
Appointed to office after a distinguished career in industry, Commissioner Palmer held the office for twelve years, longer than any other State Highway Commissioner Following experience in sales, Mr. Palmer rose to Chairman of the General Cable Corporation, and was a member of the President's Committee on Equality of Treatment and Opportunity in the Armed Services and chaired the President's Committee on Contract Compliance before becoming State Highway Commissioner. The Interstate System and much of the non-interstate freeway system were laid out during his adiminstration and, in keeping with his concern with public transport, the Division of Railroad Transportation and Rail Subsidy Program was started.

RANSFORD J. ABBOTT (PORT REPUBLIC) 1950-1954
Commander Abbott came to the State Highway Department after a varied career that saw him defer his Rutgers studies to enter the Navy's first flying corps in World War I, then return to graduate in 1922. Following graduation he spent eleven years in California, in real estate, as an assistant motion picture director, then returning to his native New Jersey in 1933. In 1935 he started a six-year stint as executive assistant to State Highway Commissioner E. Donald Sterner, then went on active duty with the Navy, serving with the Seventh Fleet as Assistant Chief of Staff. During his tenure at the Highway Department, Commissioner Abbott was (1952-1954) the first Chairman of the New Jersey Highway Authority, during which time personnel of the Highway Department materially assisted the Authority, which rented office space at Department Headquarters. During this time the last of the free sections under the Highway Department were opened. In addition, in 1953

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the routes of the State Highway System were re-numbered. On leaving the Department in 1954, Commissioner Abbott became Executive Director of the Highway Authority.

SPENCER MILLER, JR. (SOUTH ORANGE) 1942-1950

Commissioner Miller guided the Department through most of World War II and its aftermath, and the move in 1950 to the new Headquarters Building at Parkway Avenue in Ewing Township. A well-known educator, Commissioner Miller graduated from Amherst College (A.B.) and received a Ph. D. in Political Science from Columbia University. He conducted research and surveys for official bodies and worked for the U.S. Labor Department and Shipbuilding Recruitment Program and the U.S. Navy's Industrial Division. Co-founder of the American Association for Adult Education and well-known as a professor and lecturer, he was a strong and successful advocate of parkway and freeway legislation during his tenure as Highway Commissioner in New Jersey, helped form the Roadside Council in futherance of beautiful roadsides, and he was honored by the National Council of State Garden Clubs for his work in behalf of the Blue Star Memorial Highway. Upon his resignation he became President of American International College.

EDWIN DONALD STERNER (BELMAR) 1935-1942

He was the first single Highway Commissioner following the end of Commission type of administration. Educated in Belmar and at Rutgers University, Commissioner Sterner served in the U.S. Army during World War I, then served as an executive of the Sterner Coal and Lumber Company until his appointment as State Highway Commissioner. He emphasized safety construction such as divided highways, illumination, traffic signals, and attention to railroad grade crossings and other dangerous intersections. In 1938 a Bureau to handle W.P.A. workers was created within the State Highway Department.

DURING 1923-1935 THE STATE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT WAS HEADED BY A FOUR-MAN COMMISSION WITH A CHAIRMAN.

ARTHUR F. FORAN (FLEMINGTON) CHAIRMAN. 1933-1935

A former Mayor of Flemington, Commissioner Foran was educated at Villa Nova College and president of the Foran Foundry & Manufacturing Company. From 1921 to 1922 he served as U.S. Comptroller of Customs and had been on the staff of seven Governors. The construction program was severely cut in the state and nationwide due to the depression. However, the National Industrial Recovery Act provided funds (and accompanying regulations) to construct roads. In New Jersey the aid had to be allocated to the counties by specific formulas. In additon, the counties themselves relied heavily on state aid for highway costs. As a sample of the level of state construction involved, total designation of dual highways built or planned in 1934 was eighty miles. Members of the State Highway Commission during Commissioner Foran's tenure were James Baker (Jersey City) 1933-1935, Frank Dorsey (Perth Amboy) 1933-1935, and David Young, Jr. (Towaco) 1933-1935.

HUGH LENOX SCOTT (PRINCETON) 1923-1933

A West Point graduate, General Scott served in the Army before, during and after World War I, and was Chief of Staff of the U.S. Army before becoming Chairman of the N.J. State Highway Commission in 1923. The authorization of forty-five additional roads and a comprehensive scheme of acquisition and construction was passed in 1927 by the legislature based upon a report by the State Highway Engineer as modified by the Commission and legislature. A period of active construction, notable throughout the nation, was begun and pursued. Other projects included renumbering of the State Highways, design and building of the Pulaski Skyway, and the first "cloverleaf" intersection built by a state (Rt. 1 & 35, Woodbridge.) Those serving as State Highway Commission Members under General Scott were Abraham Jelin (New Brunswick) 1923-1933, Firman M. Reeves (Millville) 1927-1933, Lawrence M. Hicks (Newark) 1931-1933, H. Otto Wittpenn (Hoboken) 1929-1931, Percy Hamilton Stewart (Plainfield) 1923-1929, and Walter Kidde (Montclair) 1923-1927.

DURING 1917-1923, THE STATE HIGHWAY DEPARTMENT WAS HEADED BY AN EIGHT-MAN COMMISSION WITH A CHAIRMAN.

GEORGE LEE BURTON (SOUTH RIVER) Chairman. 1920-1923

Mayor of South River until 1921, a former Assemblyman, and member of the bar, Mr. Burton was a New York Law School graduate. The Commission headed by him was the first to be salaried ($4,000 per year), and each Commissioner had primary responsibility for specific counties as "Resident Commissioner". The work previously performed at the Public Utitlity Commission by their Designing Engineer relative to bridges was in 1922 placed in the State Highway Department, which also removed snow from State roads for the first time in 1919-1920. Members of the State Highway Commission under Commissioner Burton's Chairmanship were Thomas E. Collins (Elizabeth) 1920-1923, George Paddock (Newark) 1920-1923, Albert Scott Lincoln Doughty (Mt. Holly) 1920-1923, Walter F. Whittemore (NEWTON) 1920-1923, John Ferris (Jersey City) 1920-1922, Charles F. Seabrook

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(Bridgeton, President of Seabrook Farms) 1920-1923, David Young (Towaco) 1920 (five months), William J. Kirby (Somerville) 1920 (four months), Charles V. Duffy (Paterson) 1922-1923, and Benjamin E. Farrier (Jersey City) 1922-1923.

JOHN WARNE HERBERT, JR. (HELMETTA) Chairman. 1917-1920

The first Chairman of the State Highway Commission created by Chapter 15, P.L. 1917, John Warne Herbert, Jr. was a former Mayor of Helmetta and appointee to the Commission of Good Road Legislation of New Jersey. Active in business and politics, he was a graduate of Rutgers College and Columbia Law School. The eight-member State Highway Commission was designated to guide the State Highway Department created by Chapter 15, P.L. 1917, and was vested with the powers and duties of the existing State Highway Commission and Commissioner of Public Roads. The Commission and Department had access to dedicated funds ("State Road Fund") and responsibility for carrying out provisions of Chapter 15, P.L. 1917, which laid out the fifteen routes that were the nucleus for the State Highway System. (In 1921, Rt. 16 was added, and others were added from time to time until the revised system of 1927 laid out the basic system of this era.) Accordingly, the State Highway Commission took over those parts of county roads needed to form a system of contiguous roads and began the acquisition , design and construction activites needed to implement the statute as much as was possible during and following World War I. With the Governor as an ex officio member, the unsalaried eight-man Commission served at the Governor's pleasure. Until his death in 1918 Colonel Edwin August Stevens of Hoboken, the last Commissioner of Public Roads, 1911-1916, served on the Commission and on its three-men Executive Committee. Other members of the State Highway Commission during Commissioner Herbert's Chairmanship were Walter Buzby (Atlantic City) 1917-1920 ( Member, Executive Committee), Watson G. Clark (Tenafly) 1917-1920 (Chairman, Executive Committee), Robert S. Parsons (Nutley) 1918-1920 (Member, Executive Committee), George W.F. Gaunt (Mullica Hill) 1917-1918 (a State Senator), Anthony R. Kuser (Bernardsville) 1917-1920, Lewis C. Duncan (Westville) 1918-1920, Samuel Haverstick (Trenton) 1918-1920, Ira A. Kip, Jr. (So. Orange) 1917-1918, and George E. Blakeslee (Jersey City) 1917-1920.

Below is a list of the written sources of information consulted for the foregoing information on former Commissioners of Transportation/State Highway Commissioners in New Jersey.

Margaret L. Webb, Librarian
New Jersey Department of Transportation
October 25, 1982

Annual Report. This title refers to the reports issued annually, with some exceptions, since 1894 by the Department of Transportation and its predecessor agencies. Since creation of the Department of Transportation in 1966 the Annual Report has had the following variant titles: 1967: Transportation Activities 1967; 1968: Highlights of the 1968 Fiscal Year; 1970-4: Report of Operations (with varying subtitles); 1975-77: Highlights of Activities; 1978: Annaul Report; 1979: Transportation in Transition; 1980- Annual Report. Prior to 1966 it was issued as the Annual Report of the New Jersey State Highway Department, 1917-1949. From 1949-1966 only Monthly Reports were issued by the Department. Finally, before the State Highway Department was established in 1917 the Report of the Commissioner of Public Roads was issued 1895-1919.

Goldmann, Sidney, and Thomas J. Graves. The Organization and Administration of the New Jersey State Highway Department, prepared for Roger Hinds, Governor's Examiner of the New Jersey State Highway Department as Part IV of his Report to the Honorable Charles Edison, Governor of the State of New Jersey. Trenton, 1947.

Manual of the Legislature of New Jersey. Trenton, 1916-1982. Also known as the New Jersey Legislative Manual and Fitzgerald's Legislative Manual. Only issues published 1916 to date have been consulted for this paper.

Minutes of the State Highway Commission, Trenton, Vol.1, March 30, 1917- Similar to the Annual Report in that its title and the name of the issuing agency have changed to reflect the changes in the organization and legal status of the agency. The title changes were: Vol. 77, Nov. 11, 1950-Vol. 83, Nov. 22. 1954:State Highway Department Schedule of Business; Vol. 83, Dec. 6, 1954-Vol. 108, Dec. 12, 1966: State Highway Department Schedule of Approvals; Vol. 109, Dec. 19, 1966- Department of Transportation Schedule of Approvals.

The Transporter, newspaper, published for employees and retirees of the Department of Transportation, Trenton, Vol. 1, 1967- Also consulted were two employee Publications preceding The Transporter, of which only partial runs of issues are available: The Highway, 1942-1950 and The Highwayman (1922) both published by the State Highway Department.

Szalaj,Lad. New Jersey"s Leadership in Transportation Development.Trenton,August 1979, revised September 18,1979. Mr.Szalaj is an employee of NJDOT.

(For additional references please turn the page)

ADDITIONAL REFERENCES

N.J. Dept. of Transportation Library

Annual Reports issued by various units of the N.J. State Highway Department, 1933 to date, particularly those issued 1952-3 by the Division of Right of Way.
Development of Transportation in New Jersey, issued by New Jersey Department of Transportation Office of Information Services in 1972 and 1975. Preceded by Development of the State Highway System by New Jersey State Highway Department Bureau of Public Information 1959 through several editions ending in 1965.
New Jersey Highway Authority. The First Five Years of the Garden State Parkway 1954-1959. Red Bank. 1959. The Authority's Annual Reports, 1952-53, were also consulted.

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